DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 318 814 UD 027 383

TITLE Ten Truths of Parent Involvement: A Workshop for Use in Chapter 1 Technical Assistance.
INSTITUTION RMC Research Corp., Hampton, NH. Parent Involvement Center.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 22p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Compensatory Education; Elementary Education; Leaders Guides; *Parent Attitudes; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; *Program Improvement; *Teacher Attitudes; *Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *Education Consolidation Improvement Act Chapter 1; Technical Assistance Centers

ABSTRACT

This guide aids Chapter 1 Technical Assistance Center staff in conducting a brief (70-minute) workshop on parent participation in compensatory education programs funded under Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidaton Improvement Act. The goal is to clarify the attitudes and perceptions that are needed to expand or improve an existing Chapter 1 parent involvement program. The workshop will be especially useful for school improvement teams including Chapter 1 staff, administrators, teachers, and parents. The following materials are needed: (1) an overhead projector; (2) a screen; (3) a table for projector; (4) a three-prong outlet adaptor; (5) an extra bulb; (6) a set of 11 overhead transparencies provided in the guide; (7) the presenter's guide; and (8) participant handouts, such as a list of references provided in the guide. The following "truths" are outlined: (1) all parents have hopes and goals for their children; (2) the home is one of several spheres of influence that simultaneously shape a child; (3) the parent is the central contributor to a child's education; (4) parent involvement must be a legitimate element of education; (5) parent involvement is a process, not a program of activities; (6) parents' interaction with their own children is the cornerstone of parent involvement; (7) parent involvement requires a vision, policy, and framework; (8) most barriers to parent involvement are found within school practices; (9) any parent can be "hard to reach"; and (10) successful parent involvement nurtures relationships and partnerships. A list of 12 references is included. (FMW)

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TEN TRUTHS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

A workshop for use in Chapter 1 technical assistance

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TEN TRUTHS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT
A Presenter's Guide

Background

In 1988, the Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments were signed into law. These amendments, which reauthorized Chapter 1 of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, included new requirements for the involvement of parents in Chapter 1 programs.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation, under a specialty option in the contracts for Chapter 1 Technical Assistance Centers (TACs), initiated the Parent Involvement Center at RMC Research Corporation to collect, review, coordinate, and disseminate information on parent involvement for use by all TACs.

Among the products of the Parent Involvement Center is a series of workshops that address discrete elements and concepts behind successful parent involvement programs.

Through literature reviews, preparation of bibliographies and resource directories, and consultation with national experts in parent involvement, the Center perceived that many experts and programs were working from a common set of assumptions and beliefs that dramatically increased the potential for success in parent involvement. Although these beliefs were sometimes stated differently, they all revolved around the same concepts. Yet the basic truths had never been expressed in a way that would help other educators quickly grasp them and put them into action.

The Parent Involvement Center, again with advice from consultants, refined these concepts into "Ten Truths of Parent Involvement." In the Center's practical approach to parent involvement, these ten truths form the first building blocks for all Chapter 1 programs.

For a program attempting to expand or improve an existing parent involvement effort or for a program just beginning one, the ten truths can help clarify attitudes and perceptions necessary for success.

Isolated parent involvement activities mean little without supportive attitudes. We begin with attitude exploration.

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Objectives of the Workshop

The workshop on Ten Truths of Parent Involvement is designed to:

- ☐ provide a foundation for understanding the attitudes and perceptions that can help or hinder parent involvement
- ☐ develop an understanding of the concepts which inform the design of parent involvement program elements and activities
- ☐ provide a guide which educators can use to discuss the attitudes and perceptions that exist within their own systems before designing a plan of action

Participants

This workshop is designed for anyone who is responsible for the creation and implementation of effective parent involvement programs, including:

- ☐ SEA Chapter 1 personnel
- ☐ LEA Chapter 1 program directors and staff
- ☐ LEA district level personnel, school board members, and superintendents of schools
- ☐ Building level administrators, teachers, and support staff
- ☐ Parents

This workshop will be especially useful for school improvement teams including administrators, teachers, and parents.

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Workshop Use

This brief workshop may be used in several ways. It can serve as a stand alone workshop where time is of the essence and an introduction to fundamentals is required. It may also be used as one component of a longer training, probably as the first segment in a series which explains the essentials of parent involvement from concepts to structures, practices, and evaluation.

Workshop Outline

The Ten Truths of Parent Involvement workshop follows this schedule:

TOPIC	ACTIVITY	TIME
Introduction	Presentation/discussion	5 minutes
How the pieces of parent involvement fit together	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 1	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 2	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 3	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 4	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 5	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 6	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 7	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 8	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 9	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Truth 10	Presentation/overhead	5 minutes
Closing	Presentation/discussion	5-10 minutes

TOTAL TIME: About 70 minutes

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Materials Needed

Hardware:
- Overhead projector
- Screen
- Table for projector
- Three-prong outlet adaptor
- Extra bulb

Overheads:
- Set of 11 overheads

Print:
- Presenter's guide
- Participant handouts
  - Copies of overheads with room for notes
  - Copies of scenarios for reading during Truth 9
  - Copies of resources list

Pre-workshop Suggestion

Understanding and acceptance of the ten truths are accelerated when they are personalized. Prior to the workshop, in your advance communication with participants, ask them to think about their own experiences, either as students (how their own parents influenced their education) or as teachers/administrators (how parents of their students have made an impact). We have found that everyone has stories or experiences which relate to these concepts.

As a presenter, you may want to include a story or anecdote that is personal to you when discussing each of the ten truths. In some of the presentation notes which follow we have included sample stories to stimulate memories of your own experiences or those of others with whom you have worked. You may wish to offer these stories in your presentation. Encourage workshop participants to offer their own stories during the presentation, which will make the truths even more relevant to real life situations.

If examples are always about problems with school personnel, remind participants that parent involvement (or any other activity) works best when administrators and teachers are confident in their roles and things are generally going well in the school.

NOTES

Resources

Becher, Rhoda McShane. "Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Successful Practice." Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 1984. ED 247 032

Chrispeels, Janet A. Communicating with Parents. San Diego, CA: San Diego Office of Education, 1987.

Epstein, Joyce L. "Parent Involvement: What Research Says to Administrators." Education and Urban Society 19 (February 1987): 119-36. EJ 351 802

Henderson, Anne T.; et al. Beyond the Bakesale: An Educator's Guide to Working with Parents. Columbia, MD: The National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1986.

deKanter, Adriana; et al. "Parent Involvement Strategies: A New Emphasis on Traditional Parent Roles." Paper presented at the Conference on Effects of Alternative Designs in Compensatory Education. Washington, DC: June 17-18, 1986. ED 293 919.

McLaughlin, Milbrey and Shields, Patrick M. "Involving Parents in the Schools: Lessons for Policy." Designs for Compensatory Education: Conference Proceedings and Papers. Washington, DC: June 17-18, 1986. ED 293 290.

National School Boards Association. First Teachers: Parental Involvement in the Public Schools. Alexandria, VA 1988.

P.L.A.N. Laying the Foundations: A Parent-Child Literacy Training Kit. Washington, DC: Push Literacy Action Now.

Rich, Dorothy. Megaskills. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988.

Rubin, Roberta and Olmsted, Patricia. "Long Term Effects on Parent Involvement Follow Through Program Participation." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada, April 11-14, 1983. ED 229 113.

San Diego State University. "Review of Research on the Relationship of Parent Involvement to Student Achievement." San Diego, CA: Center for Innovation, Research and Development in Special Education.

Shields, Patrick M. "Parent Involvement in Local Chapter I Programs." Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, 1987.

Many of the articles and materials listed here are included in the packet for this workshop. We especially encourage you to read the transcript of the May 1989 Parent Involvement Workshop in Washington, DC. Many of the ten truths in today's workshop were taken from information in the May workshop, as well as from the experience and research of the consultants who presented there.

PRESENTATION SCRIPT

Ten Truths of Parent Involvement

(Approximate time: 70 minutes)

NOTES

Introduction

5 minutes

The purpose of today's training is to give you a sense of ten fundamental ideas that the experts, informed by research, say underlie successful parent involvement programs.

The absence of these understandings could set up serious roadblocks to success with your parent involvement program or limit its development.

These ten truths were conceived by the Chapter 1 Parent Involvement Center staff after extensive reviews of literature and discussion with practitioners and experts.

They found that all experts were talking about the same fundamentals, but they had never been written down as a set of ideas before.

These ten truths verbalize what the experts have learned from their research and experience. Each expert may state the truths a bit differently, and you will find yourself explaining them in terms that are meaningful to the people who will work with you setting up parent involvement programs.

The key will be to find the meaning in each that relates to your context, your experience, and your tasks at hand.

We will discuss each truth and give you some points about why it is important. We may also give you a relevant story that will illustrate how the truth works in real life or an example of how truth is exemplified in programs.

We'll also provide you with a list of references which offer comprehensive background information for each concept.

In summary, as you work to create or improve parent involvement programs, refer to these truths as you make plans. They will guide you on what could be a tricky path to success.

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How the Pieces of Parent Involvement Fit Together

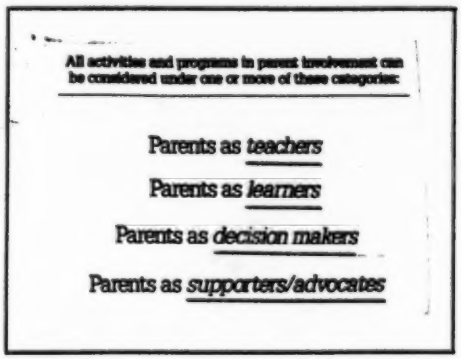
5 minutes

The Ten Truths we will discuss today can be considered as the first planks in the foundation of your parent involvement program. All of your programs and activities will spring from these understandings.

When we think about parent involvement, we think of it in three stages:

- ☐ Basic understandings -- Ten Truths of Parent Involvement
- ☐ Framework for parent involvement
- ☐ Actual program elements and activities

The framework for parent involvement is a way of categorizing all of the different activities that are done by schools to involve parents. You should be able to classify all that you do into one or more of these categories:


All activities and programs in parent involvement can be considered under one or more of these categories:
Parents as teachers
Parents as learners
Parents as decision makers
Parents as supporters/advocates

Parents as teachers
Parents as learners
Parents as decision-makers
Parents as supporters/advocates

Once you have the basic understandings and a grasp of the major concepts of the framework of parent involvement, you may wish to assess what you are currently doing in your program in light of these ideas. Through Chapter 1 Technical Assistance Centers and the Parent Involvement Center, we will be able to suggest some additional ideas (for example, program models and elements that have worked well in other schools), if needed.

Today, we're focusing on basic understandings.

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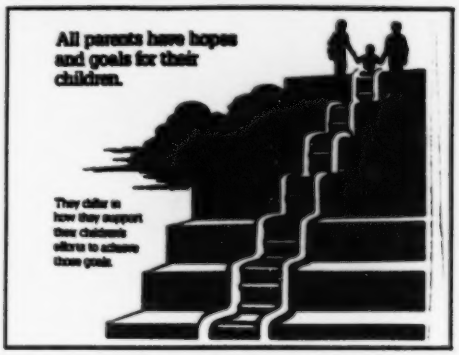
All parents have hopes and goals for their children.
They differ in how they support their children's efforts to achieve those goals.

TRUTH 1

All parents have hopes and goals for the children.

They differ in how they support their children's efforts to achieve those goals.

- All parents hope their children learn what they need to be happy and successful.
- The definition of hopes will vary by parent: a good education could be high school graduation, Ivy League education, or street smarts that will guarantee safety.
- Parents differ in their ability to help children reach their goals: some may have the skills to assist in learning or finding resources. Others may feel helpless.
- Through discussions, parents and teachers can share goals and the support children need to attain them. This exchange should become a routine.
- Educators must not exclude parents from involvement in schools because of a belief that "some parents (such as those in dysfunctional families) do not care about their children."

Relevant story

A father who has run a successful business (which he inherited from *his* father) wants his oldest son to join the firm. When the son decides he wants to go to college and pursue other professions, the father is mystified. Why, he asks, would his son spend thousands of dollars on four years of college when he could be *making* money and establishing a career for life?

The father has high hopes and goals for his son - which are fundamentally not really different from his son's goals - but higher education is not perceived as important to becoming successful.

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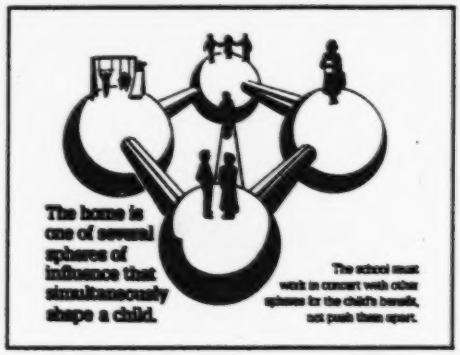
The home is one of several spheres of influence that simultaneously shape a child.
The school must work in concert with other spheres for the child's benefit, not push them apart.

TRUTH 2

The home is one of several spheres of influence that simultaneously shape a child.

The school must work in concert with other spheres for the child's benefit, not push them apart.

- ☐ School, peers, community, and home all have an impact on child development.
- ☐ These spheres will shift in their relative importance and degree of influence on the child based on family circumstances, community resources, and the child's age.
- ☐ School practices can determine whether the school and home spheres are pushed apart or drawn together to benefit the child.
- ☐ The ideal solution involves some overlap of home and school spheres working with a common understanding and goal: the good of the child.
- ☐ Children benefit from this cooperation of spheres, especially during times of stress such as divorce, illness, or unemployment.

Relevant story

A school principal, learning that home visits are one of the most effective elements of parent involvement, decided to devote much of her limited parent involvement budget to this important activity. She provided classroom coverage for teachers during visits and encouraged teachers to devote three days of release time to home visits. Teachers returned to the classroom with an amazing range of information and understanding about specific home environments and how they relate to education. One teacher remarked, "I thought I knew what home was like for my students, but it's true: you can't really know unless you've been there."

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TRUTH 3

The parent is the central contributor to a child's education.

Schools can either co-opt that role or recognize the potential of the parent.

- ☐ Parents set the stage for a child's learning by their own attitudes towards the value of learning, the quality of the learning environment they establish at home, and expectations for their children.
- ☐ Parents are the authorities on their children, while public educators are the experts on education and learning; parents' knowledge enables educators to personalize this learning to an individual child.
- ☐ Parents can offer valuable insights on how their children's educational experience is affecting them outside of school.
- ☐ Parents will be their children's consistent companion in education, while educators will frequently change.

Relevant story

A couple regularly displays, consults, and relaxes with books of all kinds in the home -- books are seen as an easy and frequent reference for answering questions, expanding horizons, and providing entertainment. Their child gets to know books as a natural and normal part of home life.

Another family has no special reason to have books in the house. Their six year old son has had little contact with adult readers and has no sense of the role of reading in adult life. When he goes to school, reading may be something he "has to do," not a skill that he looks forward to developing.

Both sets of parents have contributed to their children's education in ways that will affect self-esteem as students, interest, and probably achievement in school. The school could take a role in either case by providing information on the importance of reading or suggesting books for home reading.

Note to presenter

In this story, reading is the topic; information about reading and adult literacy from Project Plan is included in your workshop kit for reference.

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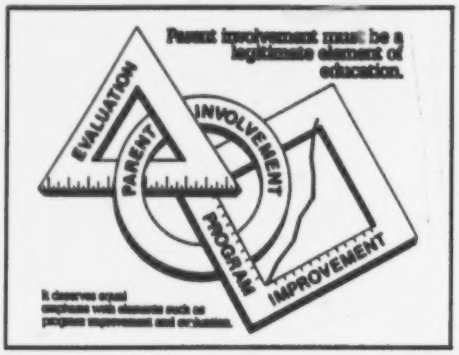

TRUTH 4

Parent involvement must be a legitimate element of education.

It deserves equal emphasis with elements such as program improvement and evaluation.

- Direct parent participation in children's instruction provides benefits to achievement and attitudes as shown through research.
- Parent involvement in their children's schooling is not new, but has not usually been recognized in an OFFICIAL, LEGITIMATE way. Chapter 1 is now doing that by stressing the importance of parent involvement through legislation.
- Program improvement and evaluation will be enhanced by involving parents and encouraging their support of Chapter 1 programs.
- New emphases on understanding parent involvement in broader terms than attendance at annual meetings and sending home progress notes reveal the potential for depth and meaning in parent involvement.

Note to presenter

Workshop participants may request research data that proves a direct link between parent involvement and improved achievement. The following references provide the best research base available. Although none has proven the direct links (and, in fact, new ways of thinking about those links may be needed before real relationships can be proven), these studies collectively indicate a connection between parent involvement and achievement.

"Review of Research of the Relationship of Parent Involvement to Student Achievement," an article included in the workshop packet, provides a good overview of existing research. You may wish to distribute this article to participants in this workshop.

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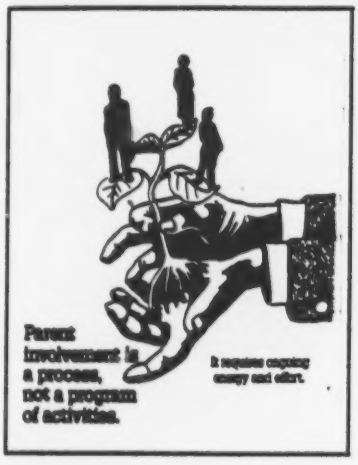
TRUTH 5



Parent involvement is a process, not a program of activities.

It requires ongoing energy and effort.

- ☐ There are no "quick fixes" in establishing or improving parent involvement programs. Simply adopting a set of activities gleaned from other programs may not work in your situation.
- ☐ Activities are not the process; well-planned activities advance the process of bringing the home and educational spheres together.
- ☐ A successful process requires constant energy and attention; educators must regularly reassess the appropriateness of their parent programs.
- ☐ In parent involvement, there is always a measure of trial and error, trying new things, assessing their impact, and modifying or abandoning them if they prove fruitless.
- ☐ It may take three to five years for a new parent involvement process to show visible signs of success.

Relevant story

An inner-city school had achieved success in involving parents, but eventually there were indications that the program was faltering. Careful examination of the problem revealed that activities which had worked well were not appropriate for new ethnic groups in the community. The school needed to rethink familiar activities with an understanding of diverse family structures, attitudes, and language. The school discovered it needed to approach fathers differently, for example, and many parents needed instruction in basic school communications.

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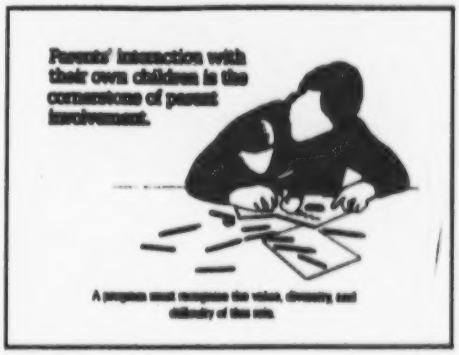
Parents' interaction with their own children is the cornerstone of parent involvement.
A program must recognize the value, diversity, and difficulty of this role.

TRUTH 6

Parents' interaction with their own children is the cornerstone of parent involvement.

A program must recognize the value, diversity, and difficulty of this role.

- ☐ The roles assumed, activities, interactions, and routines in families have impact on children's development.
- ☐ Schools can support parents in their efforts to enhance children's cognitive development by providing information and training, and reminding them that many of the things they already do are educational.
- ☐ If schools have limited resources, encouraging parents to interact with their children at home in activities is cost effective and far reaching.
- ☐ Schools sometimes focus on in-school volunteer activities -- helpful for teachers, but not very effective in enhancing child and parent development.
- ☐ Parents have indicated, through surveys, that they are most interested in help from teachers to make their at-home contributions more valuable in:
  - Assisting with and checking homework
  - Knowing the skills and subjects the child is learning in school
  - Reading with the child and helping the child learn math
  - Using items and activities around the home to help with learning
  - Understanding communications from teachers, including report cards

Note to presenter

Additional information on this truth can be found in the transcript of the May 1989 parent involvement workshop (see packet) or the Parent Involvement notebook on Administrative Issues/Teacher Training.

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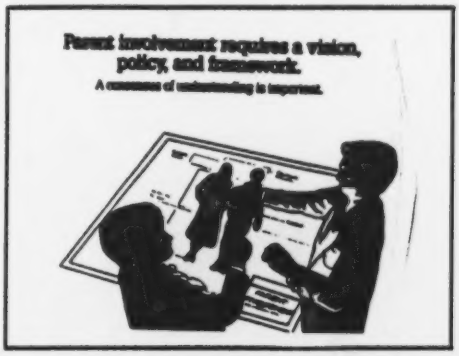

TRUTH 7

Parent involvement requires a vision, policy, and framework.

A consensus of understanding is important.

- Vision: state, district, and school leadership must develop an instinctive and informed understanding of how and why parent involvement benefits schools, children, and parents themselves. Leaders are responsible for defining a set of principles and building commitment of others to those ideas.

- Policy: a written, comprehensive policy must be prepared and disseminated to generate a widespread understanding of the purposes that parent involvement programs serve. Policy is a building block for consensus.

- Framework: specific programs, activities, and efforts must be related to the intentions of policy and work together to serve those intentions. It is helpful to have a blueprint to guide activity design over time.

- 100 percent, universal understanding of missions and goals is not critical for beginning a parent involvement program, but leaders should work towards complete understanding as programs develop and individuals' functions are defined.

Relevant story

The parent involvement component of the Indianapolis school system, recognized as one of the most successful in the nation, began by defining district policies for parent involvement. A key to success was working with the local teachers' union, which endorsed the vision and policies of the districts and acknowledged their endorsement on parent involvement products. The district also designed scenarios for future parent involvement programs and actively pursued those scenarios in its planning.

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TRUTH 8

Most barriers to parent involvement are found within school practices.

They are not found within parents.

- ☐ Schools should examine practices that have become institutionalized; practices that may encourage or discourage parent involvement.
  - Are home-school communications frequent, of short duration, in a format that both readers and non-readers can understand, and available in the language of the parents?
  - Are school events scheduled at a time convenient to parents, not just staff? (Only 7% of two-parent families have working fathers and mothers who stay at home.)
  - Have child care, transportation, translators, and convenient locations all been provided (these are the easiest types of "roadblocks" to parent involvement that can be removed)?
- ☐ Both staff and parents may have attitudes that are not conducive to meaningful parent involvement; both need opportunities to explore their own experiences.
- ☐ Most meaningful parent involvement doesn't take place in schools.

  Not all parents can come to the school, and many don't feel comfortable there. These parents should still be included, through homework, educational at-home activities, and at-home volunteer opportunities.

Activity

Ask participants to offer examples from their own experience where schools have constructed overt or subtle barriers to parent involvement.

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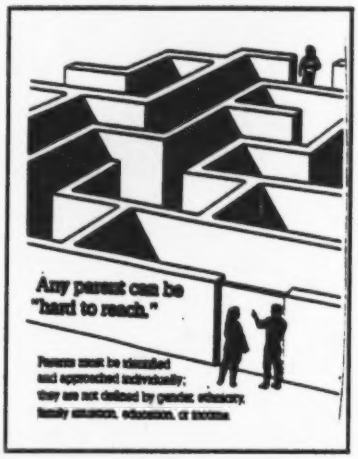

TRUTH 9

Any parent can be "hard to reach."

Parents must be identified and approached individually; they are not defined by gender, ethnicity, family situation, education, or income.

- ☐ It is too easy - and misleading - to label parents as "hard to reach" for demographic reasons.
  - Individual family circumstances determine whether the family is "hard to reach."
  - All families have circumstances that will sometimes make it difficult to become involved with the child's education.
- ☐ Three general categories of parents that may be especially "hard to reach" include (1) parents who have very low self-esteem and do not feel they have anything to offer their children, (2) parents who do not realize the importance of their role in their child's education, and (3) parents who are overwhelmed just trying to meet the needs of the family.
- ☐ If you have not had a response from parents after three attempts, you may want to consider alternative methods for reaching that family. Persevere. It may take a long time to reach them for a variety of reasons.

Reading Activity

Have participants read the handout entitled "Who is Hard to Reach?" (A sample is found on next page.) Ask them to consider the differences between the families described and what makes them "hard to reach" or "easier to reach."

Who is "hard to reach?"

The following examples illustrate the misconceptions that can develop from using labels. For example, you will note that although the first two families share certain characteristics (labels), the circumstances of their lives in other ways are very different. Only by looking at the whole picture for a family can one see possible reasons why the family might be "hard to reach" as well as see possible strategies for encouraging them to participate in parent involvement activities.

Example 1: Low-income, single-parent family (mother and two children, ages two and six)

Family A: The mother is divorced. The father contributes some child support (he is employed as an unskilled laborer, so amount is not large). Father is actively involved with the children. Mother lives near her parents and adult siblings; there are many family gatherings and interactions.

Family B: Mother is widowed. She lives in public housing with her children. Housing area is unsafe due to youth gangs and drugs. No immediate family lives within the same community.

Both families might be considered "hard to reach" because of their income levels and the absence of one parent; however, Family A has a support system which makes it easier to become involved -- Family B faces many more difficulties.

Example 2: Two-parent, middle-income family (father, mother, and two children ages two and six)

Family A: Father employed as a manager in a company, mother runs an unlicensed family day care in their house. The younger child has chronic health problems (including asthma). Both sets of grandparents live in the same community, but visits between families are rare.

Family B: Father unemployed because of an injury on the job; he is receiving disability payments. Mother works two jobs, as an aide in a nursing home five days a week and as a clerk in a department store two evenings a week and on Saturdays.

Although both families are in a group that might be considered "easy to reach" (two parents, middle income), they each have circumstances making it difficult to become involved in their children's education.

Source: Patricia Olmsted, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation

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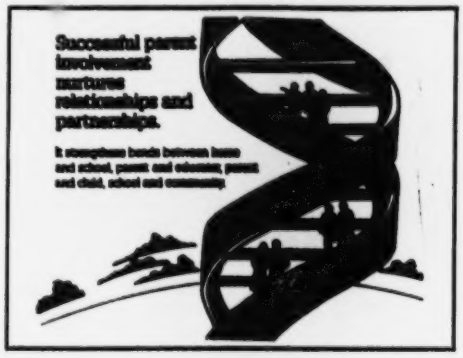

TRUTH 10

Successful parent involvement nurtures relationships and partnerships.

It strengthens the bonds between home and school, parent and educator, parent and child, school and community.

- The critical *relationship* in parent involvement is between the child and the parent. Good programs keep that relationship always in mind.

- The critical *partnership* in parent involvement is between the educator and the parent. Good programs recognize that each party has much to gain by cooperating.

- Schools often have existing community-school relationships that are valuable; the origins of these relationships may not be apparent on the surface. A careful analysis may reveal powerful ties that can be nurtured and explored further.

- As you know by now, parent involvement is not a program but a series of relationships -- teacher by teacher, family by family -- a web of relationships that affect children.

- Creative, mutually beneficial relationships can relieve schools of financial and program burdens, while giving businesses and social groups a chance to serve.

Relevant story

An elementary school in a New England mill town had the luxury of being situated right in the center of the community, near the mill. Parent involvement seemed a natural there – parents took stock of their role in education and teachers respected that role. The ties that linked commerce to community to school provided strong undercurrents that had a major effect on parent involvement, although there was no official parent involvement program. It is important to reinforce for teachers what they are already doing for parent involvement, even if they consider their practices "only teaching."

NOTES

Closing

5-10 minutes

Ask for questions and clarifications on any of the Ten Truths.

Encourage participants to share any additional experiences they may have which relate to the truths.

Remind participants where they can look for more information about any of the concepts. The list of references in this presenter's guide may be distributed to those interested in further reading.